



STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Montpelier Room, Capitol Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, 100 State Street,
Montpelier
January 20, 2009

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes – January 20, 2009

Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Chris Robbins; Bill Corrow; Kathy Larsen; Susan Schill; Tess Savage (9:12 a.m.)

DOE: Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; CFO Bill Talbott; Deputy Commissioner Bill Romond; Jill Remick; Carol King; Danna Cooper; Peter Thoms; Gail Taylor; Karin Edwards; Pat Fitzsimmons; Mark Oettinger; Barbara Crippen; Marta Cambra; Geof Hewitt; Doug Dows; Dave White; Michael Hock; Kay Charron; Margaret Schelley; Tina Muncy

Others: Brian Petraitis, ACT; Sherry Gile, VT-NEA; Laura Soares; Daniel Mickelson; John Nelson, VSBA; Brian Howe, VSBPE; Retta Dunlap, VBE; Jeff Francis, VSA; Charles Toulmin, Nellie Mae Education Foundation

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Tom James, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Chair James and Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance. The Board planned to watch the inauguration of President Barack Obama at Noon today.

Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates (Chair, Board Members)

James brought up the topic of what role the Board has in the cost of education discussion, in particular at this time of financial crisis. He sent out a message to Board members on this topic and shared copies of that message with the audience. The consensus was that the Board would like to explore ideas on cost containment while not compromising education quality, as well as identify cost drivers and what really constitutes “education spending”. In addition, the Board would like to convene a small group of influential people to have this conversation. The group could then propose changes to the Legislature. This item was not on the agenda and therefore there cannot be a formal vote.

The Board discussed the issues of governance, funding, current constraints of school districts, how the Board can “help” local boards, how the current economy affects schools, the Education Fund, what the Legislature could do to take money from the Education Fund, unfunded mandates and local control. Bill Talbott explained how education funding has changed since 1983 (information available on the DOE Web site). Commissioner Vilaseca also clarified that the local voters have the say in what they think is important for their schools to do (both legal and community expectations). He noted the laws and mandates for Vermont schools are complex enough that it is impossible to be efficient. He also has created a document noting the increased cost drivers over the last several years, and will share that with the Board this week for next month’s meeting. No Board member objected to coming to consensus on this item.

Item D: December Monthly Report

Chair James reminded those present that the monthly report has been used for the past several years and that it is another manner in which the Board communicates with constituents. It is available on the Web at: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#monthly_reports. James encouraged all to look at the monthly report via the department Web site to stay informed on what is going on with the Board. He highlighted the information in this month’s report on the recent grant received from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Item E: Public to be Heard

John Nelson of the Vermont School Boards Association spoke before the Board on the discussion re: education cost drivers. He agreed that the idea to get a group together is one his constituents would support, and he supports the idea of bridging the Executive Branch of government with people on the local level. He questioned the idea of sustainability vs. unsustainability of education costs. He noted that when voters vote no, that is when it becomes unsustainable, noting that local voters are very in touch with the economic realities of their communities. He said many schools have reduced their budgets and that when voters accept the vote, they are the ones who pay the bill, using the principles of equity and autonomy in deciding what is best for their children. He clarified the term “mandate,” indicating that it often refers to something that might actually be a cost shift, like items from Human Services now funded at the school level. He noted a hearing last year held by Senator Doug Racine on cost shifting.

Item F: Commissioner’s Update (Tom James, Bill Talbott, Armando Vilaseca)

Chair James led the group in recognition of Bill Talbott for his work over the last seven months serving as acting commissioner. He read from a letter he wrote that noted Talbott’s dedication, compassion and honesty. He also read a letter from Governor James Douglas. Finally, he read a resolution recognizing Bill for his work. Bill then spoke briefly as well and recognized the hard-working staff at the DOE.

Commissioner Vilaseca spoke to the Board on his first official day on the job and recognized the DOE staff has been working with him to catch up, and said his number one priority is providing Vermont students with the educational opportunities they deserve.

Item G: Legislative Update (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott, Mark Oettinger)

Bill Talbott reported that he had met with the House and Senate Education committees and they will meet with Armando Vilaseca later this week. They plan to present Transformation information in the near future as well. Mark Oettinger reported on S.13, the statewide sexual

predator bill. There are implications for school health curriculum and school staffing, as well as implications for the DOE Educator Licensing office to do criminal record and registry checks. He also touched on cyberbullying and the teen parenting program. Commissioner Vilaseca noted that these are examples of things that must be done that are cost drivers.

Action Items

Item H: Consent Agenda

Document(s): Consent Agenda items

Motion: Susan Schill moved, seconded by Chris Robbins, to accept the consent agenda with comment.

1. Minutes of December 16, 2008 SBE Meeting

The motion was approved unanimously (7-0).

Item I: Appointments: Education Transformation Policy Commission (Bill Romond, Kay Charron)

Document(s): Green Sheet; List of proposed commission members

Discussion: Bill Romond and Kay Charron shared with the Board the list of proposed policy commission members recommended to the Board. Board members commended them for their work on Transformation. Parent member(s) are still outstanding.

Education Transformation Policy Commission*			
Category	Member	Position	Contact
Superintendents	Mike DeWeese	Superintendent, Chittenden Central SU, Essex Junction	mdeweese@ccsuvt.org
	Martha Tucker	Superintendent, Caledonia Central SU, Danville	mtucker@danvillek12vt.org
Principals	Bill Rivard	Principal, North Country UHS, Newport	brivard@ncuhs.org
	Brigid Scheffert	Principal, Johnson Elementary School, Johnson	bscheffe@jes.k12.vt.us
Teachers	Brian Howe	Teacher, Arlington Memorial High School; Chair, Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators	brhowe@comcast.net
	Michele Forman	Social Studies Teacher, Middlebury Union High School; Former Vermont and National Teacher of the Year	mforman@acsu.k12.vt.us

Parents	In process/TBD		
Students	Kyle Weinreich	Student, Twinfield Union High School, Marshfield	kweinreich@wildblue.net
Higher Education	Karrin Wilks	Vice President, Vermont State Colleges	Karrin.wilks@vsc.edu
	Chris Koliba	UVM School of Business; Education Policy Research	ckoliba@uvm.edu
Business/Community	Chris Robbins	Former CEO, EHV Wiedmann, St. Johns bury; Current member, State Board of Education (term expires 02/09)	chrisarobbins@gmail.com
	Laura Soares	Randolph School Board; VSBA Member-at-large	soares4@comcast.net
	Contacted Vermont Business Roundtable		
House/Senate Ed Committees	Joey Donovan (Vilaseca contacted; potentially interested)	Chair, House Education Committee;	jdonovan@leg.state.vt.us
	Senate Education (Vilaseca will contact chair)		
State Board	Tom James	Chair, State Board of Education	Tomjames2@comcast.net
	New member	To be appointed 03/09	

*Established by vote of the State Board of Education 11/18/09; Commission sunsets on 12/31/09

Motion: Ruth Stokes moved, seconded by Kathy Larsen, that the State Board of Education vote to approve the appointments to the Education Transformation Policy Commission. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Kay Charron further outlined the work of the group, speaking to the desire to avoid getting bogged down in existing policies, to get common understanding of what Transformation is and what are the few critical areas that could leverage change.

Item J: FY 2009 Budget Update & FY 2010 Budget Priorities

Document(s): None

Discussion: Bill Talbott spoke before the Board on current budget issues. He believes the FY09 budget has been resolved. Last week the DOE received its FY10 budget target. The governor's budget address will occur on Thursday, January 22. At this point, the DOE will be level-funded, with the two rescissions that have already happened. The Governor has asked schools and categorical grants be level-funded. Talbott outlined what that impact would be. He agreed to outline the impacts of recommending level-funded budgets, which in some schools would actually mean a reduction in their state aid. They agreed to have a phone meeting on Friday (January 23) as the DOE is currently creating the FY10 Budget Book which will be due to the

Legislature shortly. No vote was taken as the FY Budget numbers were not ready. The Board requested that budget numbers be prepared for the 1/23/09 meeting reflecting two areas: meeting the statutory requirement vs. level funding the education fund and categorical grants

Discussion Items

Item K: Report: Special Education High/Low Spending (Bill Talbott; Karin Edwards; Doug Dows; Margaret Schelley)

Document(s):

Discussion: Karin Edwards, director of student support, and team member Doug Dows presented the annual report on high- and low-spending districts as required by Act 82. Edwards outlined the information required and what the effects of these reporting requirements are. She also summarized the data on special education student outcomes. Doug Dows reported on schools that had been identified as high spending districts since the law was implemented, noting that he had met with 30 of the districts. Very small communities were granted waivers. The goal of this effort is to identify spending inefficiencies. The correlation between high spending districts showing low performance on assessments was noted.

Item L: Growth Model Approach to NCLBA Accountability (Armando Vilaseca, Gail Taylor, Michael Hock)

Document(s): Discussion topic information

Discussion: Item postponed until February 17 meeting

Item M: Future Agendas (Board members, Armando Vilaseca, Carol King)

Discussion: Item postponed.

Adjourn

Motion: At 11:52 a.m., Chris Robbins moved, seconded by Tess Savage, to adjourn the 01/20/2009 meeting of the State Board of Education. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick

Minutes prepared by Carol King

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Resolution to Honor Bill Talbott on the Occasion of His “Retirement” from the Position of Acting Commissioner of Education

Whereas, Bill Talbott has served effectively, faithfully, and with spirited financial acumen as the Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Education since November 1997;

Whereas, when Commissioner Richard Cate departed for the University of Vermont in June 2008, Bill was selected unanimously by the State Board to serve as Acting Commissioner;

Whereas, Bill’s selection was greeted with enthusiasm, deep appreciation and respect by Department staff, and by the education and governmental communities beyond the walls of the Department; and Bill effectively maintained his CFO portfolio during his service as Acting Commissioner;

Whereas, during Bill's tenure as Acting Commissioner, the economic challenges originating on Wall Street came to State Street and Route 302, bringing with them very difficult financial problems, which he met, in a collaborative and open process, with seriousness, intelligence, integrity, understanding, and effectiveness;

Whereas, while appreciating the details and implications of hard decisions, and asking the critical questions, Bill kept his sense of humor and light touch; he successfully made extraordinary efforts to cut anything but staff, and he was not afraid to make decisions;

Whereas, during his acting commissionership, Bill (in the footsteps of former Acting Commissioner, Marge Petit) honorably maintained his culinary tradition of visiting Standards & Assessment (in both East and West Wings) to sample available offerings, seeking the perfect chocolate with relish (or without);

Whereas, in those forays into S & A territory and to other "program" areas of the Department, Bill always maintained his genuine interest and engaged competency in such questions as the design and value of assessments, the appropriate 'n' size for state and federal school accountability decisions, and the importance of school funding decisions in relation to school quality and students' achievement;

Whereas, Bill has always been kind; his sense of humor is legendary; he may have one or two peers in understanding school finance; he's a lover of country *and* western music; and, ever the philosopher/questioner, Bill always keeps nearby a copy of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*;

Whereas, while at any time Bill could modestly and persuasively reveal his sophisticated and practical knowledge of school finance, if someone said, "I have a question for you," he would almost invariably reply: "42. The answer is 42! The answer is *always* 42!"

Whereas, all Department staff are encouraged to respect and practice Bill's simple, clear, and effective mantra ... "Show up on time; work hard; go home!"

Whereas, the State Board has chosen Armando Vilaseca to serve as the new Commissioner, effective yesterday;

Whereas, we and others have observed lightness in Bill's step and demeanor since Armando's selection was announced;

Now therefore, Be It Resolved, that we honor Bill for his long and effective years of service, and especially for his fortitude, leadership, and commitment as Acting Commissioner; and we deeply appreciate his decision to remain as our distinguished CFO.

Approved by unanimous vote of the members of the Vermont State Board of Education, at Montpelier, this 20th day of January, 2009.

For the State Board of Education

Tom. James, Chair